

THE AXE OF GOD

A VERSE PLAY

Based on

Sekkizhâr Adi-p-Podi T. N. Ramachandran's

English Translation of St. Sekkizhâr's

CHANDESURA NAYANAR PURANAM

by

S. A. SANKARANARAYANAN

T.R.N.M.L. and Publications, Tanjore-7.

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FOREWORD

The life of a devotee is fundamentally different from the lives of others. William Law says: "Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted to, God. He, therefore, is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the Name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his Glory." The life of a devotee, it can be learned from the Periya Puranam, is a visible exercise and demonstration of his love for God and His devotees.

St. Sekkizhâr wrote but one opus, namely the Periya Puranam. The compilers of the Saivite Tirumurai-s, in their wisdom numbered it as the twelfth and final Tirumurai. It is the crest-jewel of the Tamil Savitie canonical works. It is a hagiography. Not only that. It is also, actually and factually, an enacted biography.

The Periya Puranam is a work of the twelfth century written in the religious language of the seventh century. Naturally it presents certain difficulties to the modern scholar. To gain a proper understanding of this glorious work, an orientation based on a much-needed adjustment, is imperative. A certain frame of mind conducive to the understanding of a religious past is essential for the reader to comprehend truths that are clothed in an idiom and terminology, which though not obsolete, are almost unfamiliar to-day. The Tamil of the modern scholar is anything but classical. The time-honoured usages of Tamil which were respected by Mahakavi Bharati and Bharatidāsan, have moved away from the ken of the modern scholar's comprehension.

The modern scholar swears by Science. This is but to be welcomed. However, it is good to remember that mere 'swearing by Science' will not do. I have met many swearers whose knowledge of science and its technique is anything but commendable. The



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The modern scholar swears by Science. This is but to be welcomed. However, it is good to remember that mere 'swearing by Science' will not do. I have met many swearers whose knowledge of science and its technique is anything but commendable. The

modern scholar does not even know that Science is not at all opposed to God. He is yet to realise that the day is not far off when science is to play the role of a servitor to God. One of the recent discoveries of modern Science is that a type of smoke (the one that is produced by the sacrificial *homa*) strengthens the ozone. In this context, the reference of St. Sekkizhār (The Purāṇam of Tiru Naalai-p-Povār) to the smoke rising from the three thousand *homa*-rits, can seem to be at once, meaningful and scientific.

The Periya Purāṇam, it is now well established, is history. In it are present, no doubt, mythic features. It is, however, gratifying to note that modern research, at least, in the Occident, is evolving a new type of hermeneutics to bring out the singularly significant values of myths.

I am of the opinion that sooner or later, respect for the Periya Purāṇam will be fully restored and mankind will stand to benefit. The Periya Purāṇam, like the Vedas of Sanskrit and Tamil, suffered much in the recent past from the ceaseless vituperative tirade carried against them relentlessly. The denigrators posed as cultural despisers and wrought havoc. However their odious attack just marked a phase which eventually proved to be beneficial.

The greatness of the Periya Purāṇam is being increasingly felt by scholars abroad. Prof. David Dean Shulman, Prof. Glenn E. Yocum, Prof. Dennis Hudson and others are able to provide us with dreamt-of insights. Prof. Shulman's work: "The Hungry God" (The University of Chicago Press-1993) highlights the features of the Purāṇam of Sirutthondar in the light of the Hebrew Bible's *qedah*. Shulman's work richly rewards our perusal. Prof. Glenn E. Yocum sojourned at Kalatthi, studied the features of the holy shrine and its surroundings and then wrote an article on St. Kanappār. His article is truly an "eye-opener". Prof. Dennis Hudson's essay which deals with the violent devotion of some of the Nayanars, has, in my view, encouraged Ms. Chandraleka Vamadeva to write her well-researched thesis: "The Concept of *Vaṇṇanpu* (Violent Love) in Tamil Saivism" (Uppsala University, Religious Studies-1995).

When after a fairly long interregnum Sri A.Sankaranarayanan called on me, I gave him a copy of the Periya Purāṇam (Part-1) translated by me and brought to his notice the manifold greatness of St. Sekkizhār's work. I conveyed to him my view that the episodes of the Periya Purāṇam can be tellingly told through the medium of Drama. I suggested to him that he should

ex his creative muscles in this noble task. With him I discussed the Puranam of Meipporul Nāyanār. When I brought to his notice the soul-uplifting features of the Puranam, he was able to capture the message with rapture. I was indeed struck with wonder with the outcome of our confabulation. Within a space of twentyfour hours, he indited the play: THE BOOK IS NOT THE WORD--a play based on the Puranam of St.Meip-porul. Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar was pleased to bless it with a Foreword. My son Dr. T.R. Iyengar funded its publication and it was released during my sixty-first birth-day celebrations. Sri S.A.S has since indited a dozen plays, and two of these are now made available for the reader.

THE AXE OF GOD is based on the Puranam of Chandesura Nāyanār. Chandesa the boy-saint--the one who knew everything untaught, the youngest of the Nāyanmār to gain ascension--, chopped off the feet of his father who kicked away the pot of milk kept for the divine ablutions of Lord Siva in His form of Kshanika Linga. Sri S.A.S. has taken a few permissible liberties with St. Sekkizhār's version. In this respect, he but follows in the footsteps of Mahā Kavi Bharati whose characterization of Dhṛitarāshtra differs from that of Bhagawan Vyāsa's.

The Axe of God is a metamorphosed stick. Such metamorphoses are truly the Acts of God. The pun suggested by the title of the play is fraught with significance. The punishing instrument of God, it is good to remember, removes altogether the guilt of the punished. The process may be painful, but the result is *nil nisi bonum*.

THE GREAT PURLOINER is based on the Puranam of Amarniti Nāyanār. Amarniti is for ever poised in NITI. The word "*niti*" says A.W. Ryder--the translator of the Panchatantra, "means roughly 'the wise conduct of life.' Western civilization must endure a certain sense of shame in realizing that no precise equivalent of the term is found in English, French, Latin or Greek. Many words are therefore necessary to explain what *niti* is, though the idea, once grasped, is clear, important and satisfying."

Amarniti and his family lived for Siva and His servitors. His life was a SIVA-VELVI-- a continual sacrifice enacted for the pure glory of Siva and His servitors.

The Great Purloiner is a play with no dramatis personae. It is a novel attempt which exploits ventriloquism with telling effect. It proves the dictum of Bharati which says: "*Vayetthe jada vastu jalai*" (nothing on earth is inanimate).

S.A.S.'s 'The Great Purloiner' is St. Sambandhar's *Ullan Kalvan* / St. Sekkizhār's Kovana-k-Kalvar. Siva is a Stealer of a devotee's soul. The soul is made whole by the divine theft. Siva holds fast to his possessions and refuses to suffer this theft, but is left in the lurch.

The plays of SAS merit a high place in the world of Tamil literature. Though this is true, yet it should be observed that these plays are not to be read with ease. The playwright but catered to the needs of the intelligent and well-equipped reader who can cultivate the plays with care. SAS proceeds on the basis that the reader is not only possessed of a knowledge of the first part, but also of a knowledge of their many-tiered evolutions. He poses in his reader a polyvaliancy.

SAS is a *mandala* by himself. This mandala, however, engenders a little circle, within the effulgence of which the intelligent reader will be happy to abide enthralled.

19 VI 1995,
Thanjavur.

Sekkizhār Adi-p-Podi T.N.R.
HONORARY DIRECTOR,
THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF SAIVA SIDDHANTA RESEARCH
DHARMAPURAM.

Dramatis personae

Yeccha Datta (*father of Vichara Sarma*)

Nagavalli (*Datta's wife*)

Vichāra Sarma (*Vicchu*), (*Datta's Son*)

Three Brahmins: Ekam, Agoram, Dharmātma.

Three women: Susi, Gomati, Sārada

People of the town.



ACT - I

SCENE - I

Hemantartu. A street in Seignalore leading to Manni river. The street is lined with coconut trees. Some brahmins of the town are seen talking.

Sunday, Morning. Ekam, Agoram, Dharmātma and others. Ekam is an austere advaitin; Agoram, very tāmāsic, is given to much eating; Dharmātma is a Guru in a pātasāla.

Agoram: Sun is slow to rise.
Of late his seven super-steeds
Don't kick dust.
Ekam! Where are you going?

Ekam: Agoraswamy, to the river now.
Prātasandya, Snānam; then to the temple.
Come with me if you will.

Ago: Why hurry in this morning,
As if it is all uttarāyanam
for everyone?

Ekam: Swamy,
Why words of this kind?
Should the light of the East
Beat but a languid rate?
Our pulse is Sivam.
Never shall you tarry;
Not a second to be lost.
This prātakalam makes you
Greater than yourself.
Please, let me go. *(He goes)*

Ago: What is this all for?
Unwarped appetities
of a crude kind!

Of such an ancestral line
That ever hurry towards
A completely they-know-not-state!

(With a hiccup)

I loathe this village's fate.

There is another youth,
A boy of a puny glory,
Always grazing cows,
Smelling dung, dust and udder,
Splashing pots and pots of milk
On sand-dunes of his make,
Which he says resembles sthāligrāmas.
To see all this
My heart goes pit-a-pat
Getting dilated thro' day, thro' night.

This Ekam knows
Nothing more than one.
His root stock of the cowfold
I know.
Better be gone are such people.
Signaloor weighs more
With such men in her womb!
Why not a fiery star
Renew its flame and burn
And sully their breed!
Here comes another
To be bundled back to Kailāsh.
Look, how he looks.
In a mingled strain.
Better, let him slip down
The slippery steep
And follow the Manni's course.
I can lay these people bare.
Inglorious is this spot
To have such men of guilt
Hey! Dharmātma! *(He shouts.)*

Dharm:

Agoraswamy,
Set not boundaries to Ekam and me.
I read your tongue easily;
A tongue to miscarry
The gossip of the hour
Into the gossip of soiled history.

- Ago: Ātman, have you heard of that boy?
- Dharm: Who?
- Ago: Of Kasyapa Gotra.
- Dharm: Who?
- Ago: Not even nine,
 When he mastered
 All Vedas and Angas and Āgamas.
- Dharm: Do you speak of Vichāra Sarma?
- Ago: Yes, Swamy.
- Dharm: Can you afford to talk of him?
- Ago: You, doubt me, my age,
 My bundled back of karma.
 I've sent round my head
 All these by one sign
 And am rid of the so-called conscience
 Which has made you folks,
 Bleary-eyed traffickers.
- Dharm: Stop.
 That boy is a great one.
 What a name, self-bestowed!
 Something must have foretold his parents.
 He never sleeps.
 Quest, incredible, but true.
 I know he ranges himself
 On the kine-side,
 Tending them, grazing them.....
- Ago: How damp your wits are!
 Bring them outdoors.
 He is full grown,
 Must be eight or nine,
 Perhaps ten years.
 Maybe kine's friend.
 Does it all mean
 He can afford to waste the milk,
 Pouring it on the sands;
 Make puddles running black with shame?

Feel hard on them
With such blows on their breasts.

Dharm: Who Knows,
That boy you speak of,
I full well know of,
Is a legate of
The milky way itself.
And perhaps for him, it seems
The cows turn uberous.
Agoram, your words taste acrid.

Ago: You seem to be talking
As if that boy is a new-found treasure,
As if this village is a wholesome stuff,
As if the slush of the riverine sides
Are marmalade,
Very nutritious to be digested.
Give all such notions
A quick despatch.
Dolorous milk, the very blood of the kine,
The circulating blood.
No milk can whiten these sands
That begot people like you.

Dharm: The cow is sent forth on Earth;
Its milk is the theme of Life;
It nourishes and life flourishes
At Siva's will.
Convert your thoughts.
Feel closer to Siva,
Who lightens your load.
Be fit to tread on
This soil great,
This soil of Panchakavya!
The whole village is fed.
It is soused in a wholesome fulfilment.
Milk aplenty,
Exuberant,
These rare cows,
Top creations
Showing greater natures;
These are things far more

Ago: You are doomed!
Whelmed beyond retrieve!
Demented, amiss,
Short-sighted cripples of Seignaloor
Ha! Ha!

Womenfolk come there:
Susi, Gomati, Sārada.

Gomati: Susi, look, how nice it is
To see these cattle,
The beating of drums,
These urchins running.
What hilarity!

Susi: We don't see many this year.
Half a number is here.
The boy is to blame.
He has, it seems,
Lifted the heart and soul of kine.

Sārada: You speak of Vicchu?

Gomati: Unearned gift!
All cows at his touch
Pour milk aplenty
From uberous udders.

Susi: The highest good is bestowed on the land
This land of Ksheerasāgara...

Sārada: That was once churned
And venom well'd up.
And our Siva had it
Pent up in His throat;
And hence the blue sea
Turned properly white!

Susi: The sea pays back
For his serious lack.
Milk everywhere in profusion
Spilling, splashing, spraying
And cascading; the soil is
Awash with a fervour
And radiance, milk-while
Outlusted by the milk of kindness,
Milk of kine-ness!

- ada: But we get all our due;
Siva proclaims His will.
Vast munificence and bounties
Wait on this land;
But that boy, a brahmin, of great descent,
Seems to have shuttled
All the routines proper to his life
And have taken, whole time
To Gosamrakshana.
- i: Son of Yecchadatta!
How can he be otherwise
But one of two extremes
At once both.
- nati: Do you call him bad?
- i: No, I call him designed.
- nati: How!
- i: Like the Yupa column
On which could abide
Swan and Eagle
Of Brahma and Vishnu
Who tried to trace
The extremes of our Lord-
The feet and the crest,
The nadir and the zenith,
The Womb and the Word.
- nati: What do you say?
- i: Vicchu has behind him
Much good. I cannot
Put your faith
In my illustrations
Of the unknown.
- nati: Kasyapa Gotra!
Sweetness mingles with the sour,
Keyed to two thoughts-
Thoughts too stern for
The frail frame of our bodies.
- ada: The brahmins here conduct
Very many yagnās;

The smoke ascends faster;
The havis go to the gods
And our vision extends
Beyond our ken.

Gomati: Of him, whatever say some,
Is it not a marvel
To see one of his years
Having mastered all
Sivāgamas, metrics of Vedas
Its shākās, angas....

Susi: Verily by noetic nexus of yore!
Precious, as a master's spirit!
To redden the venom blue
And turn the blue white
Into a sea of milk.

Sārada: A milk Ganga and a milk sāgara.
River Manni must course
To mate with these.

Gomati: Still, he is unschool'd, I heard.

Sārada: Better so; he is a wonder.
A firm-set mind like a moveless star;
A soaring, an upsurging,
A spiralling greatness in all.
Yet, hasn't he gone crazy
And cracked when he chid
That cowherd and decided
To graze the kine all by himself.

Gomati: Inherence of incompatibles,
Agni-hotri turning husbandman.

Susi: Who can axe karma!
We put around our body
Ash and robe, red ochre!
What a time-wasted body is ours!
Did not his father
Warn him for violation of routines?

Gomati: He did.....
Not to speak of our thoughts.
We do not know His ways!
He did

But Vicchu had gone up the path
None could pursue after.
Who are we to police
Bhakti of this sort?
This Vicchu is blessed by Rishabha Deva-
The Mount of Siva
The mover in ways manifold.
Vicchu's mind goes like the wind
Hurtless against the ridges of animadversion
To the joy of increasing cattle.

da: That is another yagnā perhaps.

ati: How can we put out of such minds
The light of their asterisms
And black-out the greats of the sky?
Devas may know all.
They say their feet touch not earth.
This boy may axe all his footings
And become more than a deva.

Once a ray of love shoots
Through the inclining breast,
No climb is hard,
No tapas is tedious,
No austerity is painful.
The vineyards of love
Are thrown open
When love plays its lute
And the cattle low.

ati: The best is ever blessed.

(Temple bells chime. The women go to the temple.)

SCENE - II

oon

ma and Ekam in the Matam.

The sun is up.
The light is full
To overflowing.
O Sādhū, your thoughts
Are anchored in piety.

Such is this holy soil.
You spoke of that boy, this morn.
You must study him,
See how he does his puja,
How he makes a linga
Diurnally under the Ātthi's shade,
Once, twice or even three times;
How he circumambulates it,
And sings his hymns
So spiritually salubrious,
So metrical, so Vedic,
So pure like the homa-fire.
What a fair zone
He has wrought of that tree
That shade, that sand,
That bund of the river,
And the river itself.
By his syllables divine
He animates them with
His mintage of a single thought
Of kine-care.
Such is his Linga,
The one of pure sand
Reared on faith, hope and love

On behalf of every cow
 With milk outpouring.
 Round him the cows throng
 Like the pious in the yagnā-hall.
 The roots of the Atthi
 Are moist with milk.
 All glory to this son of Siva.
 You think the milk is spilt;
 You think the cows are misused;
 You think the boy mad;
 You think me overwhelmed.
 Perish your thoughts.
 Vichāra Sarma is a flame
 Living and effulgent
 With an apostolic light.
 Mirabile dictu!
 How he shines from within!
 Hardly ten,
 He is already a star
 That dwells apart.
 What a font of service,
 What a Palladium of love
 The Atthi shade is become!
 His cows are Kāmadenus and Homa-denus;
 Luxuriant is their lactation
 For the delectation of the Devadeva.
 These cows are not mere cows;
 Vichāra Sarma is more than a Kannan;
 He is a servitor of Mukkannan.

Agoram: Something screens my vision
 And my pupils want a leading gaze.

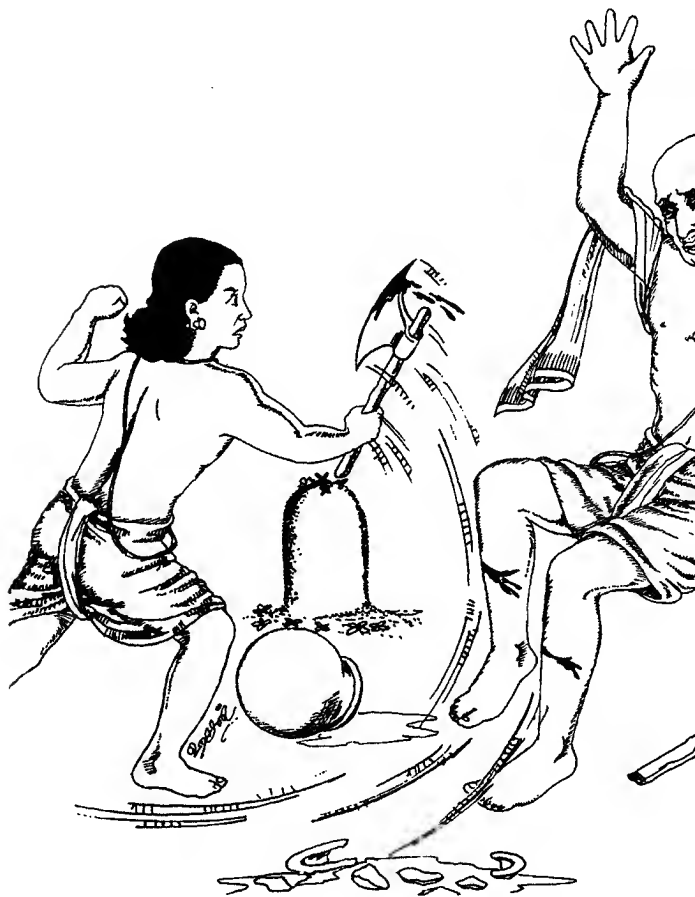
Dharm: Agora, make recompense
 For thy gossip, for thy canard and ondit;
 Strain your words
 Through a finer sieve
 And learn through grace
 The ways of Vichāra.
 The Lord hath been mindful of us;
 He will bless us.
 Honour milk, dung, ashen cakes,
 And eke the menstruum
 Of these kine.

By faith participate
In the living truth of Siva
That the boy adores, adorns,
Dredging himself from the samsāra
Of fettered life.
It is our fortune
That a boy of his years
Is a Pasupati on earth.

Agoram: You have startled me Dharm!
I shrink in fright
From what I listened to.
My goram is ended;
Agoram is born anew.

Dharm: Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya!
Let Darkness mother Light!
(Ekam comes.)

Ekam: How happy am I to see our Dharm
Recreating Agoram.
Dharm, nature so fashioned you
And with nature's leave
You could, at last
Put the essence of sense
Into a sense-defying head,
And reconcile the bovine
With the divine.
Agoram, Vichāra Sarma could not
Brook the caning of a cow;
Know him to be
The aeviternal Mother-cow;
We are but his calves.
The calf should know its cow
Even as the cow its calf.
Blessed is Seignaloor,
The town sacred to Siva,
His son Muruka and His Amsa
Who is Vichāra Sarma



T -I

SCENE -III

*One day: An hour before cowdust-hour:
Agoram goes to meet Vichara Sarma.*

Vichara: Swamy, what for have you come at this hour?
I have nothing to offer you;
I graze these cattle;
I live a humble life
Underneath this shade;
Anon, the moon will be up;
Birds are to wing nest-ward;
Stars will soon emerge in the blue.
Hark! The temple-bells
Chime: "Siva Siva."
What can I do for you?

Agoram: Vichāra, yours is a great quest.
I've heard of you from two
Discerning pundits of this village
And my feet stirred
To reach the rungs of thy thinking.
I too thought once, that you
Sat here smirching with wasted milk
This town's renown!
But I have learnt
That many are uninspired!
I've resolved to be of service to you,
In some humble way.
Pray, accept me, even me.

Vichāra: If that be Siva's will
Who am I, a little boy
To alter it?
Siva impels me through one more sign
Along the stairs

And His power speeds me on and on.
 He sped me so then,
 When I saw someone cane a cow,
 And now I see you
 Come to witness the triumph of His will
 The kine are our kith and kin;
 They save us from Sin;
 They foster yāga and yagna
 And bless with Gnosis our pragna;
 Like Dharma, the kine protect, if protect
 The cow is the abode of Devas-
 In number, three hundred and thirty th
 Service to pasu
 Is service to Pasupati.
 Simple indeed is life
 Till we camplicate it.
 Let us foster the light,
 The God-given light.
 Let none fling at it
 The blanket of Moola-Mala,
 The Vedas are good
 And the Āgamas are even better.
 You can learn
 If you like to learn.
 Bless Siva and be blessed.

Agoram:

Alas, I had my years spent
 Unavailingly!
 Yet, Dharmātma the Guru
 Chose to show me, even me, the way.
 Let me bow to him
 And bow to you.
 You are my way, my destiny, my destina
 My lord, suffer me to serve you;
 Chasten me and make me
 A servitor of Siva's servitors.
 Now, I shall pipe a song
 That these cows turn their ears
 To me in utter fixation
 And listen to Siva's name.

(He sings instantly.)

Cows of the world!
 Do you know the road

The Axe of God

You have been forced
Into, and were loosed?

Cows of the world!
Do you know the knots
That spring like roots
To obstruct your hooves?

Cows of the world!
Cease to rave
And learn to brave
The hostile world with Siva's grace.

Cows of the world!
Do seek the fold
Of divine Vichāra
To rid you of samsara.

Cows of the world
Resting under Ātthi!
Be it known
That Ātthi is Mutthi.

Cows of the world!
May your udders wax
Lactiferous and uberous
For Siva's abhisheka.

Cows of the world!
May your legs four
Serve as the pillars
Of Dharma and divine Karma.

Come on cows, take this grass,
Chew this leaf,
Munch this sprig
And eat this twig.

ACT - II

SCENE - I

*Monday: Sun in first quadrant.
Datta and Nagavalli*

*Nagavalli: Lord, the ways of Vicchu
Are puzzling.
He is made of sterner stuff.
I love him
And yet I dread him.*

*Datta: Our son grows soldierly;
Worry not. He shall see
And unconceal things
Awesome to behold.*

*Nagavalli: Lord, I hear from many
That he is ever
Companied with the kine
Under the spreading Ātthi tree
He leads them
And he feeds them;
He milks them without milking
He wields a neatherd's crook
The magic wand that draws
Is he a Brahmachāri
Or a confirmed cowherd?
When he speaks to me,
His voice is familiar,
But not so his words.
Will he become a stranger
Who is so strange?
I shudder and quake
To think of what is to betide*

Datta: Do not trouble thyself

It is of the will of Siva,
You know, we are wrought.
Some are normal
Some are not.
Are all seasons alike?
Your son may appear stranger,
But sooner or later,
There will be a change.

Nagavalli: No lord. That is not all.
He gestated in vain.
You have taught him;
But he has his ways.
He but tends a host of kine:
To what purpose?
He cares not to return home;
Does a puja after his fashion
Heedless of the rules.
Mine eyes ope but to weep
When every other Brahmin-mother
Comes and complains of him.
My heart aches
Even as my love for him waxes great.
I know not what ails him?
I feel estranged.
I want him back
Into our fold
Of household;
Must see him schooled,
Disciplined and well-placed.
In due time he must wed
And rear a family
Like a noble Brahmin.

(She sobs.)

Datta: That is done;
You want me to fetch him.
Fetch him I will.
If my son heeds me not,
Force will do it, though not grace.
I think he is the self-same pearl,
A treasure of mine-fair and goodly,
Though now a little dirtied.
As you say, I am sure,

He is not perverted to vice;
But as a child, he is perchance
A trifle perverse.
I shall try to deter him
And have him corrected
By dramatic gestures,
Though I do not intend ill.
For I am his maker,
His pater and his master.
How brave a heart I bear
To beg my son be back!
I laud him now
I'll laud him more
If he comes with me.
The father in me longs for
Simple compliance.
My son, what weans you
Away from us?
What distance hides you
From our glance?
Valli, I know thy distress.
The way, you are riddled
With this son of ours.
We have no rein laid on his will.
He is in error sore perhaps.
Come what may!
I'll retrieve him and take him.
Kine or swine,
The Earth is rent
If son does disobey his father
After initiation.
To open a mine
Earth must be rent,
Tapped vengefully, if need be.
Aye, there is the rub.
When one is angry
Things go awry.
I am yet to conquer wrath,

The Axe of God

He has shed routines
And rites proper to his years.
Let me rivet my eye
On all that he does
And with a heed as good
As can be,
Let me raise him
In obedience to me
And make him pay his due.
I'll reinstate him
In your fold. Valli dear,
Be of good cheer.

ACT -II

SCENE - II

Same time

Two street urchins dance. They are suddenly well grown and mime the moving sky and sing.

One of them is dressed like a female; they dance together Makara Sankaranti dance.

The beat of the song is slow.

Sun in Capricornus;
Cancer is bright
Rising east;
Sun is down west.
The orion darts.
What a trapeze
Of His plan!
To trap a man,
The arrow must be shot.
Belomancy!
The ear of the corn!
Connect the points:
These alpha stars
They make a stick,
They beat an axe.
They form a dart
And every meanest thorn
Is the tip of an arrow of God.
Something pricks;
The plough is retrieved!
Some one picks up sticks.
Withers the calyx

ACT - II

SCENE - III

Same time

Dharmātma and Ekam in the Matam.

Dharma: I have sent Agoram to Vicchu.
Let this indolent man
Learn from a little boy
The merits of work and worship.

Ekam: In the epicycle
Of Vicchu's love
He shall join the cattle,
Staff and self,
All in one.

Dharm: It is enough
If he is touched.
Just a votive cry
Of the lowing calf
And he shall know
His great mother
And father, Uma and Siva.

Ekam: Dharm Swamy,
You have saved a life
By giving a turn, a tilt,
A jolt, a revered gaze.
And you have sent one
Who runs to and fro
Towards a goal salvific!
Yesternight, in the sky,
I saw circling gleams
Crowing to a point
Of an icy cloud,
Sluggish, moveless,
Heavily handicapped,

Dharm: In this season of the year
 It is usual, that meteors
 Skim the milky way
 And Siva's grace inspires
 Many to their glorious tasks
 Committing, daunting,
 Bowing our heads down
 To unerring insights.
 We can't stand the riddle of His dance!
 Our legs are no legs.
 With this awesome fork
 Impinging on our minds,
 We dizzy into a heterocosm.
 We need them as we climb,
 And once we set foot
 On the peak
 Fulfilment is ours;
 In due course we are oned with Siva.

Ekam: It makes me glad;
 It is in Siva I do see
 All this; your words have
 Set me wondering
 At the crux of life,
 Of our stand, of our yuga
 Behind and before us.
 This sun is one-wheeled;
 This yuga is one-legged;
 Nor is the sun lame;
 Nor Kali walkless;
 Sun wheels evermore
 And scales the realm
 And all other orbs
 Under His power.
 Let legs speed to provident ends;
 Were it not so,
 This world, a wild work
 Of His dance would make effects
 Whereof as its facts,
 Not artefacts but chaos would be.
 Are the stars faulty?

Dharm: This is Kali;

The one is shaped with defects
The primal Siva is ever free
From faults and flaws.
His neck is blue, afire like sapphire!
His neck is laced with a serpent;
Is that not awesome?
His robe is the hide of a deer-skin;
Is that not looking cruel?
He wears ash;
Does it not smell of burning?

After churning,
Should this Siva
Opt for such things as these-
An icy head too cool to bear.
Should it not be warm?
Yet there is no harm
In this and other aspects of Him;
They differ in function but not
in competence.
The venom is contained;
The hood is yoga;
The robe is yāga;
The ash is aisvarya;
The matted locks are moist with bliss.
The moment you think thus,
Ganga and Uma
In sheer joy, as mothers,
Shall bless thee with
Purity and restraint-
The warp and woof
Of the life on earth.
When the ground is uncongenial
What use are our legs!
When the sky is all fire and brimstone
What use are our eyes!
When we can't fold our hands
In worship before His form
What use are our shoulders!
Ekam, perform a mānasa puja,
Perform a pradhakshana,
Hail Him and Her who is
Concarnate with Him

In hymn and song and psalm.
Dharma stands not
On the battered stone
With his single leg;
Twilight is discord;
You can't reverse a lotus
Can't reverse time.

ACT - II

SCENE - IV

Same day Afternoon.

Datta, Valli at home.

Datta: I am resolved.
I shall correct my son.
(A brahmin arrives.)

Datta: Welcome to you.

Brahmin: I am here, sir,
Hopelessly sad to tell
You of your son.
He does not respect any elders,
He doesn't come to the temple,
He is self-willed.
What type of Puja is his?
What a waste he makes of milk?
The cows are not any longer ours;
We do not know the quiddity of his whim.
Has he mesmerized them all?
They splash milk at their will.
We do not know;
Nor does he seem to know.
What is the nature of his abhisheka?
Mud and sand made miry with milk,
With ash awash.
When the cows low
It is music to him.
He is deaf when we speak.
His place is the patasāla,
Not the grazing ground;
Brahmachāris, not cows and calves,
Must be his companions;
He must serve his Guru

And secure his blessings;
 He should not unto himself be
 A law, following
 A ritual round
 To Āgamas unknown.
 He is young and tender;
 He can, as yet, be corrected.
 Check him, restrain him
 And do save him.
 I have warned you betimes;
 Act, do act as a father should,
 And save your son
 Who can yet be saved.

(The Brahmin goes away.)

Datta: *(to Valli)*
 Dear, did you hear what he said.

Valli: Have I not told you about him?
 God's grace alone
 Can save him.
 He is possessed.
 I shake and quake
 When I hear of him thus.

Datta: Dear, I am ashamed.
 I must harden my heart.
 My son is no outcast
 And I will not abandon him,
 Though, from now on, my voice is altered.
 I will dare and act
 Though I am not sure
 Of the outcome.
 A nameless fear haunts me
 And a terror daunts me.
 He is good to the kine;
 The kine are good to him;
 But the matter ends not there.
 I am at my wits' end.
 My reason can't last beyond its hour.
 I shall hence

ACT - III

SCENE - I

Same day Late evening

The outskirts of Seignaloor

Near the Atthi tree

(Vichara Sarma is to perform a puja. He has the tree neatly fenced; established a linga, its avudaiyār pointing to North. The very knotted roots of the tree appear as Rishaba. Cups of lotus leaves contain many sacred leaves, flowers, grass etc. Pots and pots of milk everywhere. Agoram arranges them. He lights a lamp with wicks of roots soaked in ghee in the calyx of a flower. A lighted lamp is hung from a branch. The solemn air holds a stillness.)

Ago: Swamy, I have readied things.
What else is your wish?

Vichāra: Apply sandal, kumkum-tilak.
To these cows and garland then all,
All with leaves.
*(Agoram does as bidden:
Milk splashing is heard.)*

Vichāra: Sivārpanamastu.
You are the one and only
Consummate fruit of all askesis!
Vouchsafe unto us
Your grace.
You are our only certainty.
My father is your devotee.
I have taken after him.
You've me set in this
Earthly paradise.
A tree You have grown for me!
These kine pour milk for You!
You have this Agoram sent
To attend on these rites.

Make us fit for ascent.
 I have transgressed many a routine.
 What do I know?
 I know only You;
 My time of life is all for You
 And not for aught else.
 Everything is You, O Siva!
 This leaf, this grass,
 This fruit, this honey-dew,
 This bird, its chirpings,
 This microlux of a flame
 That dances in mine eyes,
 the milk, the sand,
 The panchakavya-land,
 The blessed soil,
 The shapes and forms
 You have woven
 Are all You:
 All Siva, Siva, Siva only.
 I am Yours.

(Datta, his father, comes.)

Datta:

Son, tarry.
 This is not the way.
 The town loathes you.
 The brahmins complain.
 You need schooling.
 You lack discipline.
 You've not read things
 But only nibbled.
 Listen to me.

(Heedless of the words, Vichāra chants in a tran

Lord,
 You are the perfect One!
 I know Your wrath, Your kindness.
 How do I serve You?
 How do I deserve You?
 Haven't You stood at many removes
 Upon Your Mount Kailāsh
 Far from others.
 In kine my awareness is,

I offer me to You.
 Set my love in order!
 I cannot stand
 Any who stands against You.
 I learn from these birds and cattle,
 How in submission
 They live for Thee.

Datta: Vichāra,
 You hear me not.
 I am come.
 I am to hold you
 By reason of faith.
 I find nothing wrong in you.
 But in your ways,
 In your neglect,
 In your strange
 And whimsical commitment
 Of yourself to God
 There is neither meaning nor message!
 You seem to be dead
 To the world; I must stir you
 And bring you back to this world.

(Unaware of all else Vichāra prays)

O Siva!

(The cows shake their heads and the bells are heard.)

Crested with moon and Ganga You are!
 Blue throated You are!
 With a nimbus of a milliard of moons You are!
 Munificent and magnificent You are!
 Umāmaheswara You are!
 I salute You; I offer You
 The seat upon these gemmy sands.
 I wash Your roseate feet.
 I offer You milk and honey, root and fruit.
 I offer You panchāmṛta.
 I bathe You in panchakavya.
 I deck you with leaves and flowers.
 I bedaub you with unguents.
 Let my words animate these granules of sand.
 Let me raise a pedestal with my sankalpa.
 Let me assemble all sacred waters here

And have them lave Your feet.
 Let me spray milk and soften this plane
 Let me splash these waters
 And slake the hot air and sky.
 Let me bathe You with my love
 With the waters of my tears.
 Again with the mystic pentad of syllables
 I shall swell these waters
 And fold them tidally
 To shower on You.
 Let me have You clad
 In Tantras that enrobe You intimately.
 Let me gird You, clasp You
 And scent You with the choice aroma
 Of wood and land, and rain grains on You
 Let flowers be strewn,
 Let trees sway gently
 And shed their pollen
 On Your divine person.
 Let me light this gheed wick
 And wave it in Your presence.
 Let me offer You all these
 For Your kind acceptance.
 Let this camphor glow
 And burn ashlessly.
 Let me prostrate times without number
 Now is the hour I must offer flowers of

Datta:

(Shouting)

Son, stop.

If you don't,

You shall see the worst.

I can't brook this way of yours.

Have you lost respect to your father,

A devotee himself.

(So saying, he hurries to hold his son by hand, and
 tramples upon the 'pujadravya': the flowers, grass, lotus,
 sandal, ghee, honey, flowers, fruits and the like.)

Vichāra:

Upon this ocimum

Upon this crataeva

Upon this Ātthi

Upon this frankincense
Upon this jasmine
Upon this oleander
Upon this laurel
Upon the treasures of Kubera
I declare, I can't stand
This desecration.
Who may he be-
The unholy intruder?
Where is Agoram?
Doesn't he stand guard?

*(Datta grabs his son. With his left hand Vichāra picks up a
that turns instantly, into an axe, and he swings it thro' the
A wailing shout. Datta falls losing both legs. A sort of a th
passaged thro' his frame.)*

Agora: Ah! My lord
Both his legs are gone.
Should this happen at all?
Should blood gush here
Red on white?

Vichāra: *(Unmoved)*
O Siva!
Your will be done
For ever and ever.
I serve and obey
None but You.
You are my Father;
You are my Mother;
You are my Ammai-Appar.

*(Siva appears on His Bull in the skyey expanse.
A voice disembodied is heard.)*

Seignaloor is blessed.
The kine are the devas.
Vichāra is Chandesa.
His parents are denizens
Of our Kailāsh.
The people of this town
Are holier by their acts.
Manni shall flow ever
Her elixir of waters

Through these fields of sanctity.
The cut wood forgives the axe.
I raise him to my estate.
Vichâra, Our son of sons,
From now on you are close to Us.
Whoever comes to Our temple
To worship Us shall hail you too.
We hereby ordain
That you are entitled to
Half a circumambulation;
On earth it is a token half;
In Kailâsh it is a poornam.

(From His matted hair Lord Siva takes out a wreath of garlands Chandesa and imprints a kiss on his head. of gods disappears.)

Agoram: O Lord of gods
 Infinitely merciful!
 May heaven and earth
 Ring with Your glory!
 May the Vedas in Tamil
 Celebrate this boy-saint.
 Datta fell into knowledge;
 Vichâra rose up into experience.
 Holy! Holy! Holy!
 Siva! Siva! Siva!

